

The Poetry of John Milton:

Paradise Regained's Biographical Relationship to *Paradise Lost*

Milton's aide was a Quaker named Thomas Ellwood who was 31 years younger than his master. Ellwood introduced 54-year-old Milton to the 24-year-old Elizabeth Minshull, who became Milton's third and final wife. Ellwood was also the agent who helped Milton find a home in the country away from London during an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1665. This country home in Chalfont, St. Giles was where Milton completed the text of *Paradise Lost*. Ellwood was thrown into prison for a month because of his Quaker views, but when he was released he visited Milton who gave Ellwood a copy of the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to read (Milton had also given a copy to the great poet and puritan Andrew Marvell). When Ellwood read the manuscript, he returned it to Milton, praising it highly, but with a playful caveat—that Milton had written a lot about *Paradise Lost* but nothing about Paradise Found. Ellwood reports that Milton quietly meditated upon that statement for a while and then changed the subject. It is impossible to know what Milton was thinking in that brief interlude of silence, but it is possible that he was thinking that Ellwood was not paying close attention to the text. The restoration of the paradise of Heaven through the agency of Christ is stated throughout *Paradise Lost*, including in the opening lines where it mentions that Eden is lost to humanity “till one greater Man / Restore us, and regain the Blissful seat” (1.4–5). Regardless of what Milton might have thought of Ellwood's reading comprehension skills, Ellwood's comment appears to have prompted Milton to write the sequel, *Paradise Regained*. Later on, when Ellwood visited Milton, the poet presented a manuscript of *Paradise Regained* to Ellwood and thanked him for inspiring him to create *Paradise Regained*.